

Vancouver Youth Model United Nations 2019



United Nations Security Council Background Guide

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My name is Lily Douglas and it is my pleasure to be your director of the United Nations Security Council for VYMUN 2019. As your director, I hope to nurture an educational and exciting experience that leads to self-discovery at the conference. This year, we will examine two topics: prohibition of chemical warfare in Syria and military junta.

In both theory and practice, the UNSC is the most influential international institution. It is entrusted to preserve global peace and security, mediate governmental disputes, impose economic sanctions, and as a last resort, direct military action against sources of aggression. Due to its momentum and pressing responsibilities, the Council is distinct from any other UN organization in that its decisions are legally binding, which is to say that member states must comply with the decisions of the Council.

Our first topic, the prohibition of chemical warfare in Syria, is a paramount topic that is relevant in current international discourse. The seriousness of this issue has grown over the past, horrific five years as over 500,000 people have died and 10 million have been displaced, and numerous war crimes have been committed. Among the most heinous aspects of the war is the recurrent use of chemical weapons since late 2012. Chemical weapons are uniquely terrifying weapons of mass destruction and without a solution to the conflict the horrific killing continues.

Our second topic, military juntas, is a broad one. It involves extensive political, economic, and military challenges that greatly affect many states. Military juntas pose a threat to modern democracy, as well as peace and order for the international community. These dictatorships have been an issue throughout history and the present times and more extensive and comprehensive discussion on solving and rejection of this method is required. All delegates must keep an open mind during this topic, and keep in mind the policies for every unique situation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at unsc@vymun.com. I look forward to seeing everyone in October.

Sincerely,
Lily Douglas
Director of UNSC | VYMUN 2019

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Military Juntas

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Topic 1: Prohibition of Chemical Warfare in Syria

Questions to Consider

1. Why does the Syrian government choose to employ chemical weapons?
2. What methods would allow the Security Council to better control the usage of chemical weapons?
3. How can we effectively hold perpetrators of chemical warfare accountable in a just and proportional way?
4. Has prevention of the development of chemical warfare been effective and what are the flaws in current enforcement of the United Nations ban?

Overview

A chemical weapon is defined as a toxic chemical that can cause fatality or incapacitation, employed in warfare. Currently, these are often deployed using artillery shells, rockets, or ballistic missiles and they are considered a weapon of mass destruction. The use of chemical weapons is prohibited under international law, and there are several treaties related to stopping the use of chemical weapons. Despite this and the growing disapproval for these weapons in the international community, several nations harbour active chemical warfare programs.

Chemical weapon use -- in warfare, personal attacks, and assassinations -- dates back centuries. Though they were infrequently employed by some militaries prior to the 20th century, the first large scale weaponization of chemicals occurred during the First World War. With the rise of the industrial production of chemical warfare devices, an influx of chemical agents in combat has been seen. Furthermore, events in World War I prompted international efforts to curb the use and production of chemical agents, such as the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In recent years, the use of chemical weapons have been seen predominantly in the Syrian Civil War. In 2011, protests against the abusive President Bashar al-Assad led to rapid violence, and the country descended into civil war. Several groups and nations have become involved, each with their own agenda, making the situation far more complex and prolonging the fighting. All sides of the war have committed atrocities and torn communities apart, dimming hopes of peace and creating an obstinate war that is currently in a deadlock.

There is a heavy divide in the Security Council over this issue due to overlapping alliances, yet failure to act will accelerate an already devastating humanitarian crisis and war.

Repeated use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Civil War is not only a violation of international law, but it also poses a severe threat humanitarian and security threats to civilians, as well as healthcare professionals and first responders. Moreover, the continued amnesty for groups employing chemical warfare programs is setting a dangerous precedent for future and current conflicts. The focus of this topic is to determine whether a prohibition on chemical warfare is pertinent and how it could be implemented.

Timeline

April 22, 1915: The German military launches the first successful mass use of chemical weapons in the Second Battle of Ypres during World War One, which did not technically violate the 1899 Hague Peace Conference Declaration. Both sides begin to build their chemical weapons programs.

August 12, 1921: During the Rif War, Spain used chemical weapons against the civilian populace. The Spanish Minister of War stated in a telegram that “I have been obstinately resistant to the use of suffocating gases against these indigenous peoples but after what they have done, and of their treacherous and deceptive conduct, I have to use them with true joy.”¹

August 20, 1921: Spain requests mustard gas from Germany during the Rif War, despite the fact that Germany was prohibited to manufacture such weapons by the Treaty of Versailles (1919). The first confirmed usage of chemical weaponry during this war was not until 1923.

June 17, 1925: The League of Nations adopts the Geneva Protocol. This limits the use of chemical weapons, but does not altogether prevent parties from developing and stockpiling them. Many countries sign this treaty with allowances that would grant them the ability to respond in kind if attacked with chemical arsenals.

February 29, 1936: The Italian forces’ use of sulphur gas during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War shifts the momentum of combat in favour of the Italians and is successful in demoralising Ethiopian troops. The use of chemical weapons results in many long-lasting, painful injuries and in a significant number of deaths. It is estimated that 15 000 of the 50 000 Ethiopian casualties in the war were caused by chemical weapons.²

March 26, 1938: The Japanese Imperial army commences full scale use of poisonous gases exclusively against Communist Chinese groups, which continues on throughout World War Two.

July 31, 1942: Heydrich initiates the “final solution”, commencing a genocide against Jewish peoples and other minorities. Millions were gassed with carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide, in what remains the deadliest use of poison gas. While the Nazis did not extensively

¹ Stepanov 1962, p.142

² Ibid

use these weapons on the battle front, they maintained active chemical weapons programs, using concentration camp prisoners to secretly manufacture and test the effects of tabun, a nerve gas.

April 29, 1977: The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) comes into effect. The convention aims to eliminate the chemical category of weapons of mass destruction, and created the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). State Parties of this multilateral treaty must take the necessary actions to enforce the prohibition of chemical weapons within their jurisdiction. Members include 193 countries, out of that, Israel has signed but not ratified the treaty, while three nations: Egypt, North Korea, and South Sudan have neither signed nor accepted the CWC.

July 17, 2000: President Bashar al-Assad is inaugurated after the death of his father, Hafez al-Assad, who was President of Syria from 1971 to 2000. These governments follow a counterinsurgency approach, leading them to be known as harsh and oppressive against minority groups and political nonconformists.

March 15, 2011: The first phases of what would flourish into a civil war are ignited by protests and inspired by the Arab Spring uprisings across the Middle East. Those of the younger generation in southern Daraa express their distaste for the current regimes through anti-regime graffiti in public spaces. Many are arrested, held for days and tortured, prompting local demonstrations calling for their release. Protests spread across Syria, with the focus shifting to the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. As the protests gain momentum, the administration discharges its military.

July 23, 2012: Jihad Makdissi, Syria's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, confirms that Syria has chemical weapons. He does state that these weapons would never be unleashed against the Syrian people, but assuredly against external aggression.

August 20, 2012: President Barack Obama of the United States expresses that “[the US has] been very clear to the Assad regime... a red line for us is if we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons.”³ He claims that the United States' military responses would change if foreign chemical weapons are employed; however, he is criticized for not delivering on this declaration against Syrian forces.

December 23, 2012: The first alleged use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime is reported. Seven people are allegedly killed in Homs, a city in western Syria, by a “poisonous gas.”

³ Sanders-Zakre 2018

March 20, 2013: The Syrian government requests that the United Nations conduct an investigation on the alleged chemical weapons attacks by opposition forces reported on March 19, 2013. The UN-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announces the UN's investigation into the possible use of chemical weapons, and concertedly with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), this is referred to as the Sellström missions. As a result of the investigations, the UK and France endorse rebel allegations of chemical weapons used by the Syrian government.

August 21, 2013: A large-scale chemical weapons attack in the suburbs of the Ghouta region claims thousands of victims, many of whom were non-combatant. This event leads the United Nation Security Council to hold an emergency meeting in order to shift the objectives of previous investigations to this attack. NATO members are strongly convinced it is the Syrian government behind the attack; however, Russia and China are critical of this claim due to the lack of evidence.

September 27, 2013: Syria signs the CWC and commits to declare all chemical weapon possessions and arrange their destruction. The OPCW validates a timeline for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. The UNSC unanimously votes to adopt resolution 2118, supporting the OPCW's timeline. The OPCW-UN Joint Mission is established to oversee and verify the results of the Assad government's commitments under the CWC.

March 6, 2015: The UNSC adopts Resolution 2209, which condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria and threatens to impose measures under Chapter VII of its charter, such as economic sanctions and military intervention, if Syria does not comply. All members vote in favour, with the exception of Venezuela's abstention.

April 4, 2017: Another attack takes place, killing dozens of people in the northern province of Idlib. The attack is believed to have been conducted by the Syrian government, due to present evidence and results from the OPCW-UN JM, however they deny responsibility. In retaliation, the United States uses cruise missiles against an alleged chemical weapons base without the UNSC's approval. Russia denounces the air strikes.

April 7, 2018: Reports of dozens of deaths and hundreds of other affected victims of an apparent chemical weapons attack in the city of Douma rise after several smaller chlorine gas attacks earlier in 2018. Thus far, the Human Rights Watch has recorded 85 chemical weapons attacks in Syria since 2013. The US, UK, and France respond with missile strikes on alleged chemical weapon facilities. Russia and China condemn the airstrikes and accuse the UK of staging evidence against the Assad government.

March 1, 2019: The OPCW Fact Finding Mission reveals in its final report that a toxic chemical, most likely chlorine, was used in the April 7th, 2018 Douma attack.

Historical Analysis

The earliest mention of toxic weapons was recorded in ancient Greek myths where Hercules poisons his arrows with the venom of Hydra monsters. Great epics such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and the Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* further reference the use of toxic warfare of chemical nature.

Interestingly enough, the face of present day chemical warfare, Syria, is also where the earliest archaeological evidence of chemical warfare of the past was found. The oldest known evidence of a chemical attack was uncovered in Dura-Europos, an ancient Roman city that is now a part of modern-day Syria dating back to 256 C.E.⁴ Yet, it was not until the 19th and 20th centuries that we began to develop toxins and poison gases of devastating ability to incapacitate and for lethality, such as mustard gas, chlorine, and the nerve gas sarin. Further predating their use was the fear and moral revulsion these gases created.

Over time, as war modernized, military leaders and generals continued to be increasingly fascinated by chemical warfare. With the dawn of the industrial era, technological advancements yielded not only new substances, but also more efficient employment techniques and ways to produce them in large quantities. These weapons made their debut during the First World War. An estimated 1.2 million people were exposed to poisonous gases during World War One and of that, 91,000 of them died⁵.

The world began to turn its back on chemical weapons as it became scorned by the global society. The Geneva Protocol, drafted and signed in 1925 at the conference for The Supervision of the International Trade in Arms and Ammunition, prohibits the use of chemical weapons in conflicts. It should be noted that "the Geneva Protocol does not regulate the production, research, or stockpiling of these weapons."⁶ While it is customarily considered applicable to conflicts of all scales, it does not regulate the use of chemical weaponry in internal conflicts. In addition, it allows nations the right to retaliate should they be the victims of an adversarial chemical attack.

In World War Two, major powers stockpiled these weapons, yet feared the employment of chemical warfare. Japan used these weapons against China in the Pacific theatre of the war, deploying aerial bombs, artillery shells, and grenades against Chinese

⁴ Blakemore 2018

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Wey 2018

military and civilians in invasions. While less intense on the European front, there was a notable use of chlorine gas.

It is imperative to note that chemicals were used to murder millions of people of Jewish faith and other minorities in Nazi concentration camps during the Holocaust, perpetrated by Nazi Germany⁷. As it stands, this remains the most lethal use of poison gas in history⁸. Impressed by Germany's use of chemical weapons in the Battle of Ypres, Japan operated some of the most volatile human experiment programs in human history, conducted by Unit 731, the biological and chemical warfare research unit of the Japanese Imperial Army, who were seeking to develop more advanced weapons. This included the testing of chemical weapons and other various artillery on human targets, as well as subjecting them to the exposure of chemical weapons inside gas chambers.

Furthermore, the international community was shocked by the horrific events of the Holocaust and appeared to halt the use of chemical warfare agents. However, further research and testing continued throughout the 20th century. Over the years, the US developed and produced stockpiles used most notoriously in the Vietnam War, in defiance of the Geneva Protocol. Additionally, during The Soviet Union's secretive and decade-long regime, it's believed that the USSR did the same, and employed chemical agents against civilians in Soviet-Afgan War. Beyond, the decades long Cold War prevented the UNSC from reaching any comprehensive agreements to prohibit the use of chemical weaponry.⁹

Officially coming into effect in 1997, the Chemical Weapons Convention's (CWC) 193 members agree to ban the stockpiling, development, production, and use of chemical weapons and set out requirements for all member states to safely terminate their existing stockpiles. Parallel with its enforcement agency, the intergovernmental Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) which oversees the global endeavor to eliminate chemical weapons, the CWC was generally regarded as a success, yet its goal to eliminate chemical weapons is nowhere near complete. The UNSC has since passed resolutions requiring states to "promote the universal adoption and full implementation, and, where necessary, strengthening of multilateral treaties to which they are parties, whose aim is to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons"¹⁰ and Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapon.

The future for this domain is nothing but uncertain. The reputation of the Security Council and its ability to mandate the regulations of chemical warfare are at stake. Delegates

⁷ Wirtz 2016, p. 302

⁸ Coffey 2014, p. 152-154

⁹ Abe 2017, p.168

¹⁰ UNSC Resolution 1540

must address not only the tumultuous situation in Syria, but should also consider future conflicts and regulations in the chemical weapon domain.

Past UN Action

Three investigative actions have been progressive on this issue and will be briefly discussed.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

Established by the Human Rights Council, the Commission's mandate is the investigation into all alleged violations of international human rights law in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Commission was also created to establish the facts and circumstances of such violations and crimes, and if possible, responsible parties. The Human Rights Council has repeatedly extended the Commission's mandate since then, most recently until 31 March 2018. Since the unrest began in March 2011, millions of people have been displaced from their homes with 13.5 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance¹¹.

Sellström Mission (March-December 2013)

Officially known as the United Nations Mission to Investigate Alleged Uses of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sellström mission was originally designated by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in response to the Syrian government's allegations of the rebel groups employing chemical weapons. The mission confirmed the "large scale" use of chemical weapons against civilians. It was not mandated to attribute blame for the use of chemical weapons¹².

UN-OPCW Joint Mission (October 2013-June 2014)

Based on recommendations developed in close consultation between the United Nations Secretary-General and the OPCW Director-General, the Joint Mission was formally created with a goal to see the timely elimination of Syria's chemical weapons program in a timely and safe manor. After intense negotiations, Syria joined the CWC and agreed to the destruction of its chemical weapons arsenal. The purpose of this mission was to verify and validate the execution of this process. Both Syrian officials and Russian diplomats were generally cooperative, destroying all declared chemical weapons by 23 June 2018. However, the US and France have explicitly maintained that Syria did not declare the entirety of its chemical weapon possession¹³.

OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (August 2015-November 2017)

Following further allegations of chemical weapons usage in Syria, the Security Council mandated the JIM to determine not only the use of chemical weapons, but also "to the greatest extent feasible individuals, entities, groups or governments responsible for any

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IICISyria/Pages/AboutCoI.aspx>

¹² Madiski, Hindawi 2017, p.17

¹³ <https://opcw.unmissions.org/>

use of chemicals as weapons.”¹⁴ The JIM found the Syrian government responsible for at least three chemical weapon attacks between 2014 and 2016.¹⁵ Its mandate expired in November 2017 following Russia’s veto against renewal.

UNSC Lack of Involvement

Because the UNSC fails to hold perpetrators accountable, the Council allows the weapons (including sarin and other nerve agents, as well as mustard or chlorine gas) to be used against civilians. Russia has used its Security Council veto eleven times to shield its allies from justice. In addition, Russia has recently vetoed the renewal of joint investigations by the UN and OPCW.

Current Situation

The general consensus of the international community is that chemical weapons are a moral atrocity. Most strongly believe that no one, soldier or civilian alike, deserves to be subject to torture or death by a poisonous gas, though some scholars note that the nature of war is cruel, and other methods of warfare are often not much more humane.¹⁶ Regardless, current international dialogue has moved beyond discussing the moral issues with chemical weapons and instead are more concerned on investigating and preventing their use in Syria.

Averting future chemical weapon use and holding perpetrators accountable is imperative for the security of civilians globally. Chemical weapons induce horrible effects, especially for unprotected civilians, and normalization of chemical weapons could lead to even more horrific use of weapons of mass destruction in the future.

Civil War

Conflict in Syria began with demonstrations, but a month later, a thousand civilians had been killed by government forces, and people were taking up arms against the longtime dictator Bashar al-Assad.¹⁷

Today, over half a million people have died in one of the world’s most brutal ongoing civil wars, and upwards of eleven million have been displaced.¹⁸ The Syrian Civil War has become an increasingly complex conflict, especially given the presence of powerful foreign actors. One of the most heinous acts of this devastating civil war has been the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime since 2012, including the 2013 sarin gas attack that killed more than 1,400 civilians in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta¹⁹ The US, UK, and France estimate that the Syrian Armed Forces have employed chemical agents at least fifty times

¹⁴ S/RES/2235, 7 August 2015, paragraph 4.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Waitt 1942 p. 12-13

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

since the beginning of the civil war,²⁰ while Russia and China condemn the allegations, stating that they are tools of propaganda based on unsound evidence. As such, numerous investigations have been mandated by both the UNSC and OPCW. While most nations lean towards the United States' version of events, there remains a divide on how to distribute blame and prevent similar incidents from recurring. US president Donald Trump, in collaboration with France and the U.K., has ordered air attacks in Syria on targets associated with al-Assad. British Prime Minister Theresa May commented that while an alternative solution would have been preferred, in this situation she believed this was the only option. Specifically, these attacks were not designed to cause regime or fix civil war, but rather to deter the use of chemical weapons.

Effectively, the Syrian Civil War has been transformed into an international proxy war. The increasing investment of foreign parties has created a spiral of violence, in which no one appears willing to compromise. With little progress achieved by the nine rounds of UN-facilitated peace talks, and the president unwilling to negotiate or compromise, the war demands decisive action from the UNSC, but this seems near impossible given the hardline stances of all parties.

Prevention is a complicated issue. Although Russia and China do not publicly believe the Assad regime to be at fault for chemical attacks, the US and its allies continue to take punitive measures against Syria. These measures include increasing military presence in the Middle East, economic sanctions, and airstrikes on military facilities. Unsurprisingly, Russia and China condemn these actions as violations of international law and vow to retaliate in similar forms if they continue.

Possible Solutions

Diplomatic Route

On the surface, it appears the most straightforward option is a negotiated peace between the Assad regime and the opposition. This would likely alter existing structures of power in Syria through the creation of new federal government structures. Surprisingly, the United States, Russia, and even Bashar al-Assad himself have at some points voiced support for this policy. Despite this, Assad's removal from power is looking increasingly unlikely because complete regime alteration would require large scale intervention. A policy of federalization and the establishment of a power-sharing coalition government remains on the table, though Assad would remain in control.

Because of the Security Council's division over the situation in Syria, Western officials are reportedly considering the usage of a diplomatic route known as "uniting for peace". This would require nine members of the security council to bring resolutions to a vote at the general assembly, allowing them to bypass Russia's veto. Even so, ending the Syrian

²⁰ Haley 2018

conflict is a responsibility that must be taken on by the international community as a whole: there will be no solution to this conflict without cooperation from Russia.

Determining and Distributing Blame

Another method is to more effectively investigate allegations of chemical weapon use by increasing the power of the OPCW through allowing it the resources and authority to attribute blame. Currently, the OPCW is only allowed to investigate with permission from the alleged government and is forbidden from determining the responsibility of the attacks. The expansion of its role is opposed by Russia and China, who cite potential abuse of power.

Punitive Actions Against Perpetrators

Many government leaders have also proposed suggested enforcing consequences for those who utilize chemical weapons. Some have argued for severe economic sanctions on Syria, while others have brought up military consequences. These efforts have mostly been vetoed by Russia and China, who argue that national sovereignty precedes the prohibition of chemical weapons. There have been calls by other bodies of the UN for the Council to impose sanctions other more concrete measures against the Assad government. However, their position is more practically based on foreign interests rather than ideology, and thus is subject to influence.

Bloc Positions

Russia and China

The most outspoken supporters of the Assad regime, Russia and China, claim that the allegations of chemical attacks against the regime are unfounded. Their alignment with the Assad regime has led Russia to place upwards of 26,000 Russian military personnel in Syria to assist the government, an action that they have publicly acknowledged.²¹ Russia, with the support of China, has used its veto power to block any Security Council action against the Assad regime. Members of this bloc believe that the Assad government should remain the sole authority in Syria, and have condemned US-led airstrikes on Syria that were in retaliation for alleged chemical attacks. These states generally condone the use of chemical weapons and in some cases even supply Syria with the means to develop chemical warfare technology. Notably, Russia used nerve agent against a former Russian intelligence agent and his daughter.

NATO Members

The US, UK, and France, in cooperation with Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, are confident that the Assad regime has employed chemical weapons, and have repeatedly condemned this. Other NATO members also share the stance, although they are involved to a lesser extent. Members of this bloc are opposed to chemical weapons primarily for humanitarian, ideological, and political reasons, and aim to prevent chemical attacks and

²¹ O'Connor 2018

punish perpetrators. These states are eager to impose economic sanctions or even acts of military retaliation upon Syria for the use of chemical weapons. Government leaders belonging to this bloc have frequently debated whether to enforce the prohibition of chemical weapons or maintain the survival of rebel groups in Syria. They believe failure of the Security Council to act will "send a message of impunity."²²

Neutral Members

Others members are aligned with neither side. They are opposed to airstrikes on Syria without the approval of the Security Council. Although none of the neutral members hold the veto power, the P5 members value their vote and are often willing to concede on other areas of international economics or security in order to garner their favor.

²² Osborne 2017

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Topic 2: Military Juntas

Questions to Consider

1. How can the UNSC protect human rights and civil liberties under a military dictatorship?
2. What role can the UNSC play in preventing torture, sexual violence, and malicious harassment by military parties?
3. How should the UNSC deal with the proximity of ruling revolutionary military leaders to the regimes they have replaced, and ensure that corruption doesn't occur?
4. How successful are military juntas as a form of transitional government and as a means of creating peace and security?
5. How can the UNSC ensure that a "cascade effect" -- the spread of military juntas across a region over time -- does not occur?
6. If these governments are not effective or justified, is there a way to avoid their establishment through combatting political instability?

Overview

A military junta refers to a form of government led by military leaders who hold supreme political authority. These military dictatorships are often formed after a coup d'état, and they almost always impose martial law, meaning the nation remains in a permanent state of emergency. Military juntas have justified their rule as a way to foster political stability in a nation, and while they may gradually be able to restore the civilian government, their general motivation for seizing power and little respect for human rights repeatedly threatens peace and security.

Since the end of the Second World War, military rule has occurred exclusively in developing nations. This is likely due to the repressive nondemocratic regimes that often govern these nations, which either survive with the support of the military or through the militaries' subsequent rule post coup. Despite juntas' portrayal as non-partisan parties providing interim governance and leadership during times of political turmoil, many actually choose to portray civilian politicians as corrupt or ineffective, despite the corruption that is often present in the military regimes themselves.

While militaries specialize in the usage of violence and force, past militaries have held elections, used judiciaries to approximate the rule of law, and adhered to constitutions. However, extrajudicial torture and killings are still commonplace under any military regime. Government transitions overseen by military junta where democracy is the goal have

historically been exceedingly problematic, as militaries tend to intentionally interfere in the process in order to remain in power. The conclusions of military dictatorships have ultimately varied. Some have collapsed on their own while others have been negotiated out of power. In the end, not all transitions are successful in leading to civilian rule; in many circumstances, they have only been replaced by a new version of the same type of rule.

The Security Council is gravely concerned with the violence, oppression, and deteriorating humanitarian conditions experienced under military dictators, which constitute a threat to international peace and security. The Council is implored to do its best to find an end to these situations, and is encouraged to use all the means at its disposal to restore order and democratic rights to all citizens of the global community.

Timeline

This timeline will only briefly outline the cases of a few notable military juntas.

100-44 BCE: In the Roman Republic, Julius Caesar, one of the greatest military leaders, declares himself a dictator for life. Caesar continued to be a permanent figure in office during this era.

1960: U Nu, the prime minister of independent Burma, achieves a resolute win in elections, but his promotion of Buddhism as the state religion and his tolerance of separatism angers the military.

March 1962: U Nu's party is ousted in military coup led by Gen Ne Win, who abolished the federal system and inaugurates "the Burmese Way to Socialism".²³ Ge Ne Win nationalises the economy, forms a single-party state with the Socialist Programme Party, and bans independent newspapers.

1988: Thousands of people are killed in anti-government riots in Burma. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) is formed. Slorc declares martial law, arrests thousands of people, including advocates of democracy and human rights, and renames Burma 'Myanmar', with the capital, Rangoon, becoming Yangon.

April 1964: A coup d'état is led by the Armed Forces against the administration of President Joao Goulart, establishing the Brazilian military government, also known in Brazil as the Fifth Brazilian Republic.

1970: Brazil's military government enacts a new, restrictive constitution, stifling freedom of speech and political opposition. Its guidelines consists of nationalism, economic development, and anti-communism. The dictatorship reaches the height of its popularity with

²³ Ibid.

the “Brazilian Miracle”, even as the regime continues to censor all media and torture and exile dissidents.

September 1973: The military dictatorship of Chile is established after the democratically-elected socialist government of Salvador Allende is overthrown in a coup d’etat. General Augusto Pinochet rules the country, using the alleged breakdown of democracy and economic crisis to justify its rule and severe repression, claiming its mission as a “national reconstruction”.

1979: Joao Figueiredo becomes the President of Brazil. However, he cannot control the crumbling economy, chronic inflation, or the effects of the concurrent falls of other military dictatorships throughout South America.

1980: In Chile, the military regime replaces the Chilean Constitution of 1925 with a new constitution. This establishes a series of plans that would lead to the 1988 Chilean National Plebiscite on October 5th, 1988.

1982: Brazil holds its first free elections for the national legislature after 20 years of authoritarian rule, with civilian candidates for the first time since the 1960s.

1988: A new constitution is passed, officially returning Brazil to democracy. Brazil's military government provided a model for other military regimes and dictatorships around Latin America, being organised by the Doctrine of National Security, which “justified” the military’s actions and operating in the interest of national security in a time of crisis, allowing an intellectual basis whereupon other military regimes relied.

1988: The Chilean National Plebiscite is held to determine whether Augustus Pinochet should be allowed eight more years in office. 56% of the population votes to remove him, which allows him another year in office with general elections to be held three months before Pinochet’s final term expires.

1990: A general election is held in Myanmar, where the opposition party National League for Democracy (NLD) achieves a landslide victory, but the result was ignored by the military.

March 1990: The newly elected President and Congress take office to replace Pinochet’s military authoritarian administration. However, the military remains out of civilian control for several years after the junta’s fall from power. The military regime left over 3,000 dead or missing, tortured tens of thousands of prisoners,²⁴ and drove 200,00 citizens to exile.²⁵ The effects of this continues to be felt in Chilean politics and economic environment.

²⁴ BBC 2012

²⁵ Wright 2005 p.57-56

2007: China and Russia vetoed a draft US resolution at the UN Security Council urging Myanmar to stop persecuting minority and opposition groups. Myanmar's military government declares 14 years of constitutional talks complete and closes the National Convention. Buddhist monks hold a series of anti-government protests which are met with a military response. After some delay, the UN Security Council deplores the military crackdown on peaceful protesters.

2008: The government in Myanmar publishes a proposed new constitution for the state, which allocates a quarter of seats in parliament to the military and bans opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from holding office. The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announces plans for engagement with military rulers.

2010: Myanmar's majority party announces that long-awaited election laws have been passed, with provisions for an electoral commission hand-picked by the junta. The main military-backed party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), claims a resounding victory in Myanmar's first election in 20 years. Opposition groups allege widespread fraud and the election is widely condemned as a sham. The junta says the election marks the transition from military rule to a civilian democracy.

December 2018: Anti-government demonstrations erupt across Sudan over steep price rises and shortages, but shifts to calls for president al-Bashir to step down. Security forces respond with a crackdown that kills dozens.

April 2019: The Sudanese army arrests al-Bashir, planning to take over for the next two years and suspending the country's constitution.

April 2019: The African Union gives the Sudanese military council an ultimatum to install a civilian government within 15 days under pressure to suspend Sudan as a member of the AU.

April 2019: Sudanese protesters suspend talks with the ruling military council, claiming it has refused to meet their demands for an immediate transfer to a civilian government.

August 2019: Sudan's main opposition coalition and the ruling military council formally sign a final power-sharing deal, paving the way to a civilian-led government. This document outlines the powers and relationships between the branches of the transitional government.

Historical Analysis

In the past, political regimes in large-scale societies were a combination of military, religious, economic, and monarchical powers. Therefore, all states were in some part ruled by their military as the division between military and civilian powers, and growth of bureaucratic armed forces in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries evolved into the current interpretation of the term "military rule".

During the 20th century, not all authoritarian regimes were accompanied by military dictatorship. In fact, most repressive and nondemocratic governments, notably the Nazis and Stalinists, were party dictatorships in which civilian control of the military was well entrenched.

As the Cold War ended, there was a sense of optimism and a general expectancy of large-scale democratization, making communist and totalitarian states history²⁶. Thus, the rapid spread of military rule was a result of superpower competition over their spheres of influence. Following the Cuban Revolution (1959), states influenced by the U.S. were swayed by the emphasis on threats to internal security, which contributed to an increase in the direct involvement of the military in politics.

The spread of military juntas reached a height in the 1960s and 70s. Military juntas were imposed in many Central and South American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, and Uruguay. Abduction and torture by the authorities became routine and methodical, and the term “disappearance” was used to describe those who had died as a result of extrajudicial killings, and whose bodies were unable to be found. These acts were seen as necessary to gain valuable information that would protect the state or its rulers and to intimidate any potential opposition.

Since the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, there has been a notable reduction in the amount of military dictatorships surfacing in the world. The UN Security Council has frequently endorsed the notion that democracy and democratic governance are desirable preconditions for domestic stability and international peace and security. The Council’s own actions in support of democracy in the 1990s, particularly in cases such as Haiti and Sierra Leone, demonstrated that the Council was prepared not only to engage in rhetoric on the importance of democracy, but also to take action to protect democratic governance. In each of those situations, the Council identified the ouster of a democratically elected government as a threat to international peace and security warranting Chapter VII action in the form of sanctions against those who threatened democracy.

Past UN Action

There has not yet been comprehensive action taken against the concept of military juntas. However, there have been resolutions and missions passed and carried out by the UNSC and privately by states against specific military juntas.

UNAMSIL (1999-2006)

²⁶ Morgan & Morlaine 2009

Created by Security Council Resolution 1270 of 22 October 1999, the United Nation Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) intended to assist the government of Sierra Leone in “extending its authority, restoring law and order, and stabilizing the situation in the country, and, and to assist in the promotion of a political process which should lead to a renewed disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program and the holding, in due course, of free and fair elections.”²⁷

UNAMISL had the following mandate:

1. To encourage cooperation between the Government of Sierra Leone and the other parties to the Lome Peace Agreement (a peace agreement signed between the warring parties in Sierra Leone, promoting Sierra Leone to return to civilian rule) with the implementation of the Agreement, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan.
2. To monitor adherence to the ceasefire in accordance with the ceasefire agreement of 18 May 1999 (S/1999/585, annex) through the structures provided for such actions.
3. To aid in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance and provide security.
4. To provide support with the governmental elections, which are to be held in accordance with the present constitution of Sierra Leone, and will promote the return of a civilian government.
5. To coordinate with and assist Sierra Leone’s law enforcement authorities in the discharge of their responsibilities.
6. To guard weapons, ammunition and other military equipment collected from ex-combatants and to assist in their subsequent disposal or destruction.

The Council authorized UNAMSIL to take the necessary action to fulfil those tasks, rendering the mission relatively successful. This leaders of this mission were advantageous in supporting citizens negotiate an end to the war and move through the peace process. The role of UNAMSIL was pivotal in assisting the government in establishing effective civil authority throughout the country.

UN Resolution 940 (1994)

When the UN Resolution 940 was adopted on July 31, 1994, the Council authorized member states to “form a multinational force under unified command and control and, to use all necessary means to facilitate the departure from Haiti of the military leadership, consistent with the Governors Island Agreement, the prompt return of the legitimately elected President and the restoration of the legitimate authorities of the Government of Haiti, and to establish and maintain a secure and stable environment that will permit implementation of the Governors Island Agreement,”²⁸ and further extended the mandate of the UN mission in Haiti (UNMIH).

²⁷ Annan 2001, paragraph 58

²⁸ Security Council 1994

The Council condemned the illegal regime in Haiti and their refusal to cooperate with efforts by the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) to bring about the implementation of the Governor’s Island Agreement. The UN took leadership in the Gardener’s Island Agreement by providing support through mediation of political dialogue and facilitating an agreement to a political truce and social pact to create the conditions necessary to ensure a peaceful transition. Through this resolution the Council also approved the deployment of UNMIH upon the completion of the multinational forces mission to assist the democratic government to sustain stable institutions and “professionalize the Haitian armed forces and create a separate police force and assist the legitimate government in establishing an environment conducive to the holding of free and fair elections, to be monitored by the UN and OAS.”²⁹

Relevant Security Council Resolutions

S/RES/940	31 July 1994	Authorization to form a multinational force under unified command and control to restore the legitimately elected President and authorities of the Government of Haiti and extension of the mandate of the UN Mission in Haiti
S/RES/1132	8 October 1997	The situation in Sierra Leone
S/RES/1270	22 October 1999	The situation in Sierra Leone

Current Situation

Newly installed military governments regularly proclaim the intention of eventually returning power to civilians after an unpredictable period of time to ensure “cleansing”³⁰. However, few juntas voluntarily surrender power to the civilian groups. At the peak of their existence, in the 1960’s and 70’s, only one in twenty post-coup governments eventually gave way to a civilian government.³¹

The UN Security Council endorses the notion that democracy and democratic governance are fundamentally desirable in establishing stability and international peace and security.³² The

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Welch 1978

³¹ Ibid.

³²Farrall p.914

Council has taken action against military juntas in the 1990s, particularly in cases such as Haiti and Sierra Leone, demonstrating that the Council is prepared to engage in rhetoric and taken action to ensure peace and restore civilian rule.

Coups leading to governance by a military regime are usually preceded by high degrees of political conflict, economic crisis, and weak political parties. Externally, the threat of defeat in war, foreign political and military assistance, and military rule in neighboring nations can promote the facilitation of coups. In some regions, a “cascade effect” occurs, where the implementation of military rule in a single state leads to the rise of military regimes in other states in the region, which may eventually lead to cooperation between military leaders. For example, the 1964 coup in Brazil was followed by a coups in Argentina in 1966, Chile and Uruguay in 1973, and a second one in Argentina in 1976. In addition to the cascade effect, some military regimes fall to the influence of the ideas of the past government. This often occurs in cases where the civilian-ousted government had close ties to the military as opposed to cases where the coup is led by the military if there is internal conflict between the government and military.

Militaries are also managed hierarchically, divided between high commanders, junior officers, and other enlisted personnel, and are often separated by socioeconomic divides. In ethnically divided societies, recruitment can vary and be discriminatory, resulting in the armed forces being seen as comprised of or representing one ethnic group that oppresses others.

Case Study: Sudan 2019-Present

Protests erupting in towns and cities across Sudan in mid-December 2018 with protestors demanding Bashir’s resignation from the presidency. In response to protests, Sudan’s government forces began using live ammunition on protestors and arbitrarily detaining hundreds of civilians. Further conflicts between the government and rebel forces mounted, igniting humanitarian issues and posing greater threats to security.

April 11, 2019 marked the Sudanese coup d’etat where President Omar al-Bashir was removed from power by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). On this same day, the Transitional Military Council, the military junta now governing Sudan, arose. The same forces that had ended Bashir’s reign began threatening the survival of the revolution in Sudan. The Transitional Military Council formed by senior generals of the SAF, the National Intelligence and Security Services, and other parliamentary groups promised to converse with protester leaders to guide the transition towards a genuinely democratic government. However, the council and opposition failed to agree on the establishment and composition of the temporary government. This caused the council’s forces to brutally silence

pro-democracy protesters, which exponentially increased the chances of protracted conflict, diminishing the hope for a true democratic government.

Protests continued, with democratic opposition groups calling for the TMC to immediately and unconditionally to relinquish power to a civilian-led transitional government. On July 3, 2019, soldiers and parliamentary groups controlled by the military junta opened fire on a pro-democracy sit-in in Khartoum, killing at least 118 people.³³ This turned Sudan into a “human rights abyss”, according to the United Nations.³⁴ On July 5, 2019, the TMC and the civilian protestors, represented by the Forces of Freedom and Change, agreed on a deal to allow the formation of governmental institutions, under which the presidency of the transitional government would shift between the military and civilians. This deal also included an 11 member sovereign council with five military members, five civilian members, and one civilian chosen by consensus, a civilian cabinet, and a legislative council. The new Sovereignty Council would be led by a military personnel for 21 months, a civilian for 18 months, and after those 39 months, elections would be held. Under the conditions of this deal, the TMC would be dissolved. On August 20, 2019, the Sovereignty Council was established, officially dissolving the TMC and transferring power to the new council. This has been received with wide international attention.

However, conflicts have continued in Sudan and the security situation is still fragile in Darfur, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile. The international community must take a coordinated approach in order to support the peace process and a successful outcome. The current political situation and changes taking place in Sudan provide a unique opportunity to reform how military dictatorships are approached and controlled in order to better maintain peace and security.

Possible Solutions

Sanctions

Security Council sanctions take a number of forms to accomplish a variety of goals. These measures range from comprehensive economic and trade sanctions to more targeted measures such as arms embargoes, travel bans, and financial or commodity restrictions. In the past, the Security Council has applied sanctions to encourage peaceful transitions, deter non-constitutional changes, repress terrorism, protect human rights, and promote non-proliferation. These measures are most effective at maintaining or restoring international peace and security when applied in tandem with a comprehensive strategy encompassing peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It should be noted that sanctions are not punitive, contrary to many assumptions, but many agendas are carried out with the intention to support governments and regions working towards a peaceful transition. (See Libyan military dictatorship (1969) and sanctions as an example.)

³³ Asmelash & Karimi 2019

³⁴ Ibid.

Third Party Mediation Between Civilian Groups and Military Leaders

When peace agreements are becoming increasingly elusive and political will is waning, the implementation of third party mediation via the UN can energize discussion between parties and further promote agreement. A priority of the council is reaching a peaceful dispute settlement which will ultimately lessen human suffering and economic impacts if crises can be averted before they begin. “The Security Council also has the power to recommend terms of settlement to the parties, if they request this or if the Council considers that the continuance of their dispute is in fact likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.”³⁵ When bilateral negotiation is futile, third party mediation can aid in shifting positions and providing a base for compromise and healthy dialogue leading to successful resolutions and agreements. The UNSC has the power to establish the necessary means to carry out mediation.

Incentivizing the Abdication of Military Dictators

Negotiation and persuasion is not always successful, and often an agreement cannot be reached between firm military leaders and parties fighting for the return of a civilian-led government. In these situations, the provision of amnesty is hardly enough as an incentive. While removal of the military from power is the ultimate goal, sacrifices and compromises must be made to benefit the country to the best extent. The allocation of a percentage of revenues from resources to the military budget and the transferral of assets of another ministry to the ministry of defence, combined with constitutionally protected amnesties, wouldn't necessarily allow opposition everything it wanted, but could potentially convince the military to relinquish power. This model of carving out autonomous economic reliefs and combining it with political protection could effectively coax a military from power. While this might seem unpalatable, it presents a reasonable way toward democracy aside from intervention, and gives the base for a chance at a more just and equitable future. (Portugal, South Korea, and Taiwan have made full transitions to democracy though this route.)

Bloc Positions

NATO Members

NATO members have been staunch supporters of democracy and in many cases have often intervened in crises in favour of promoting democracy. In past situations involving military dictatorships, the US, UK, and France have publicly supported protest groups challenging the military regimes. Members of this bloc are opposed to military juntas primarily for political and social reasons and are willing to implement economic sanctions and take military action in order to overthrow military regimes. In addition, France, Belgium, Italy, Canada, and other EU members have supported resolutions that will implement the restoration of democracy in politically unstable countries, with the US and UK being front liners in securing such

³⁵ UN Charter, Article 37&38

resolutions. It is in the best interest of members of this bloc find comprehensive solutions that will aim to efficiently abolish and prohibit military juntas.

Russia and China

Russia and China hold the position of supporting military dictators and their regimes. Other states such as India, Turkey, South Africa and Iran support this position, yet China and Russia remain the staunchest supporters of military rule. This perspective can be attributed to heavily outspoken nationalism and strong belief in communism during the Cold War era. Presently, the condition of these states to support military juntas can be attributed to the understanding that a military coup would more likely produce a Russia or China-backed anti-American dictatorship. Russia's eagerness to involve itself in wars and befriend military dictators is an attempt to cultivate the following and support of repressive regimes globally and find a chance to assert its sphere of influence. Russia and Chinese actions are converging to challenge the US-led global order. Their shared belief is that "weakening democracy can accelerate the decline of Western influence and advance both Russia's and China's geopolitical goals."³⁶

³⁶ Kendall-Taylor & Shullman 2018

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